

This is an excerpt from the methods section of the following article:

Abramson, Corey M. 2008. "Who Are the Clients?: Goal Displacement in an Adult Day Care Center for Elders with Dementia." *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*. Forthcoming.

I typed field notes each day immediately upon returning from the research site to preserve accuracy and detail. I then entered the notes into a non-hierarchical qualitative data analysis computer program that was used in the coding and analysis of notes.

Qualitative data analysis (QDA) programs such as the one used in this study function by allowing researchers to structure the massive amounts of qualitative data generated in ethnographic research in meaningful and systematic ways, code that data with an extensive concept and variable scheme, and retrieve the data in ways that allow the user to evaluate patterns in the data. The point of computer assisted qualitative data analysis is not to turn field accounts into quantifiable data that can be the subject of statistical analysis, but rather to reference and cross-reference occurrences in ways that make the analysis of patterns more systematic and less anecdotal, while retaining the depth of information that makes this sort of data unique (See Dohan and Sánchez-Jankowski 1998 for a discussion of the use of software in analyzing ethnographic data). The point of QDA software is not to thwart the "thick description" (Geertz 2000) of meaningful human behavior, but to assist in managing, systematizing, and explaining voluminous and rich ethnographic data by helping researchers see the larger picture. QDA programs facilitate this by helping researchers avoid the pitfall of producing an analysis that is skewed towards recent, exceptional, or vivid events (Dohan and Sánchez-Jankowski 1998).

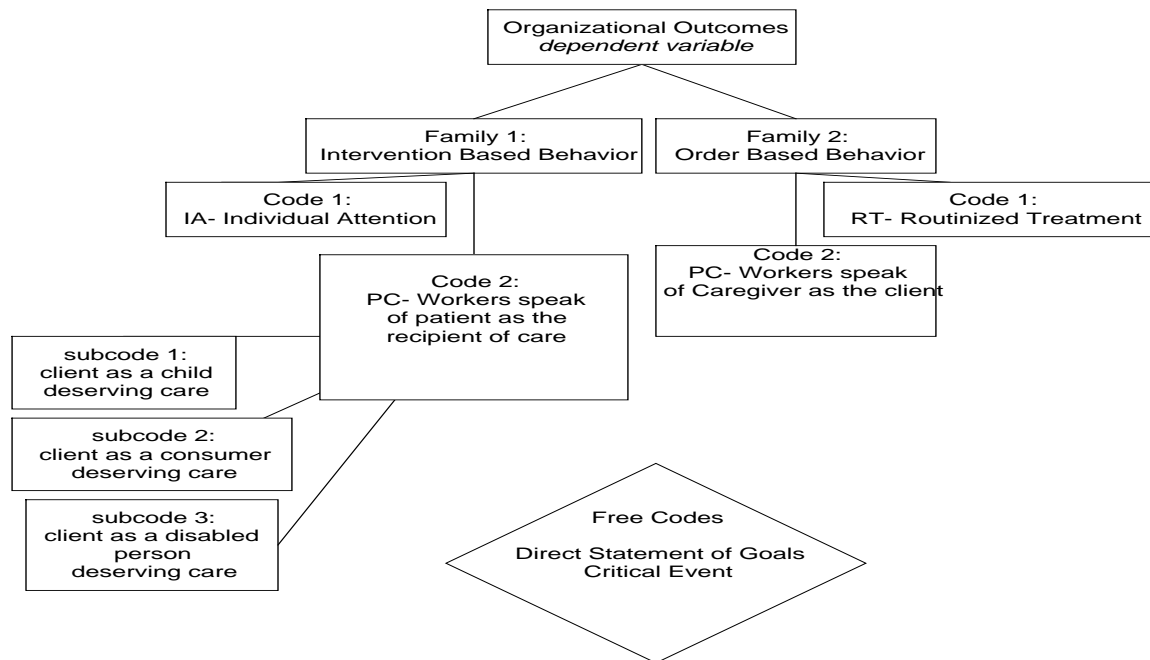
In this project, I used an extensive coding scheme that contained codes generated both deductively (prior to fieldwork) and inductively (during fieldwork). These codes were instrumental in helping me recognize and chart patterns of behavior, speech, circumstances, and organizational outcomes. By applying codes that easily allowed me to retrieve particular types of occurrences in my ethnographic field data, I was better able to determine whether events were isolated incidents or part of larger patterns. Further, coding allowed me to see what types of events co-occurred with which sets of circumstances, behaviors, and justifications.

On the deductive side, my codebook utilized concepts and variables drawn from preexisting empirical literature and social theory, before I entered the field. Deductive codes were primarily broken up into organizational outcomes (my dependent variable) and circumstances (my independent variable). Examples of deductive codes included things such as demographic categories, types of patient treatment, verbal descriptions of who the center served, the types of activities clients were involved in, the behavior of workers, types of financial constraints, and a host of other factors. Codes were placed into larger substantively meaningful code families that provided a higher level of abstraction. For instance, one of the things I examined was the extent to which the treatment of clients was individualized based on their specific needs, or routinized for the entire population. Routinized treatment and individualized treatment became code families under which a host of specific codes were grouped. Some codes had sub-codes that provided more descriptive depth and a lower level of abstraction. For instance, “workers discussing elders as service recipients” was a code, and the specific types of

frames they employed (i.e. elders as adults, elders as children, elders as disabled) formed specific sub-codes.

The basic organizational structure of my coding scheme followed this form: Outcome/Circumstances (independent or dependent variable)|code family (most general category)|codes (less general)|sub-codes (most specific). I also used “free codes” that were not assigned to a specific family, allowing for open associations when a code did not exactly fit into a pre-existing family. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of a sample coding scheme and its organization. The actual system of codes was much more developed, and included a great number of families, codes, and sub-codes. [Figure 1 Near here]

Figure 1: Overview of Coding Structure



On the inductive side, I developed codes and families that were applied to emerging patterns at the site, even if they were not adequately represented in my initial coding

schema. Some inductive concepts of interest included the use of children's' games and objects, worker absenteeism, and the use of center resources for personal reasons.

Inductive concepts were placed into pre-existing code families when applicable. If not, new code families were formed. As new patterns emerged and were given codes, earlier data were recoded to maintain consistency throughout the data-set. The application of codes to data was not mutually exclusive, meaning even the smallest bit of behavioral or speech data could be tagged with all of the relevant codes.